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# NIXON IS DELAYING MISSILE DECISION; OPPOSITION RISES

President Now Planning to  
Make Public His Sentinel  
Stand Later in Week

AWAITS LAIRD'S RETURN

3 Scientists Say Deployment  
of Defensive System Would  
Endanger U.S. Security

By JOHN W. FINNEY

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 11—As Senate opposition to the Sentinel antimissile system mounted, President Nixon today delayed until later this week a decision on whether to deploy the missile defense.

The bipartisan Senate opposition kept up pressure on the President by arranging for three prominent science advisers in the Eisenhower Administration to present at the White House arguments against deploying the multibillion-dollar system.

The three scientists, who told a Senate subcommittee today that the antimissile system would endanger the nation's security, were Dr. James R. Killian Jr., chairman of the board of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Dr. George B. Kistiakowsky, professor of chemistry at Harvard University; and Dr. Herbert F. York, professor of physics at the University of California, San Diego.

News Party Leaders

At his news conference last Tuesday, Mr. Nixon promised a decision at the "first" of this week on whether to proceed with deployment, which he has had under review for a month. But at a meeting with Republican Congressional leaders this morning, the President said that he would not announce his decision until later this week.

The White House said that the President was "exploring the matter further" and particularly wanted to consult with Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, who returns tomorrow from a trip to South Vietnam.

The White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, cautioned against drawing "any dramatic conclusions" from the delay. But on Capitol Hill the delay heightened speculation that the President was reassessing Pentagon recommendations to proceed with a modified

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Sentinel system and would seek to avoid a political confrontation with a divided Congress by ordering a further delay in deployment.

Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, a potential Presidential contender in 1972, gave further indication today that he was prepared to tangle with the President if Mr. Nixon ordered deployment of the Sentinel.

Appearing briefly at a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee hearing, Senator Kennedy observed, "we are at a crossroads in foreign and domestic policy." He said deployment of an antimissile system now "would hardly increase our own security and certainly would contribute to international tensions."

The President was leaning one way or the other, however, he was keeping it a tight secret, even from his Republican Congressional advisers.

The White House has refused to permit Republican Senators who oppose the Sentinel program to see the President. And when the subject of the Sentinel came up today at the end of his weekly meeting with the Congressional leaders, the President was said to have politely cut off the discussion with the observation that he would have an announcement "in a few days."

## Relations Are Strained

The President's disinclination to consult with Senators was producing some strain in his relations with Congress, even within Republican ranks. Meanwhile, some Democrats were spoiling for a partisan fight with the President, should he decide to go ahead with Sentinel deployment.

"We are preparing a real buzz saw for him," observed one Democratic Senator on the Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Disarmament, which has been holding hearings on the Sentinel issue.

Indicative of the mounting Senate opposition were reports that Senator Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico, ranking Democrat on the Congressional Joint Atomic Energy Committee, was turning against the Sentinel system. With his prestige in nuclear matters, Mr. Anderson could carry a few wavering Senators with him if he came out against deployment.

## Calls Move a 'Mistake'

Senator Fred R. Harris of Oklahoma, who voted for deployment last year, said today that he was now convinced it would "certainly be a mistake" to begin construction. Contending that the billions of dollars required for the system were needed to solve the nation's internal problems, the Democratic National Chairman said: "We always hear the farthest rumble of a distant drum but not the voice of a hungry child."

The Disarmament Subcommittee continued to build its "educational" case against Sentinel deployment today with testimony from Dr. Killian and Dr. Kistiakowsky, who served

as science advisers to President Eisenhower, and Dr. York, who was director of defense research and engineering in the Eisenhower Administration.

## Eisenhower Stand Noted

The effect of their appearance before the committee, headed by Senator Albert Gore, Democrat of Tennessee, was to invoke the Eisenhower name against Sentinel deployment. All three noted that President Eisenhower opposed deployment of an antimissile system in his Administration despite considerable pressure from Congress and the Pentagon.

In varying ways, all three took the position that deployment would jeopardize rather than enhance the nation's security by accelerating the nuclear arms race. They also argued that there was no immediate national security requirement for the Sentinel.

Senator Clifford P. Case, Republican of New Jersey, found their testimony so "impressive" that he called Bryce N. Harlow, the President's Congressional aide, to arrange for the three scientists to go to the White House in the late afternoon.

As described by Senator Case, the arrangement called for them to see Henry A. Kissinger, the President's national security aide, and Mr. Nixon "if the President's schedule permits."

The three scientists met for an hour with Mr. Kissinger, but did not see the President.

## Study Panel Proposed

Dr. Killian made a proposal that some senators believed could give Mr. Nixon a political "out" in the debate. He suggested that an independent study group be created by the White House to make a comprehensive review of the nation's requirements in offensive and defensive strategic weapons.

The group's recommendations, he said, would be of "special value because they would be 'independent conclusions reached by a group of competent citizens who were free of organizational loyalties.'"

"By virtue of its freedom from any vested interests," he continued, "such a commission could also provide some reassurance—and I attach great importance to this—to the growing number of citizens who are concerned about the 'military industrial complex' and its alleged influence on our strategic policies and programs."

The three introduced a new argument into the debate by telling the subcommittee that deployment of the Sentinel system could mean the President would lose control over the use of atomic weapons. They said that this would happen because a decision on whether to fire a defensive missile, armed with a thermonuclear warhead, would be left to a computer or perhaps a junior military officer.

Noting that an antimissile system must be maintained on a "hair-trigger status" because of the short time for warning of an attack, Dr. York said that its deployment would speed the process under which "the power to make certain life-and-death decisions is inexorably passing from statesman and politicians to more narrowly focused technicians, and from human beings to machines."

"The direction we are going in," he continued, "is not toward the ultimate weapon but toward ultimate absurdity. We are getting to the point in complexity and in the time scale where there is no time for humans, and decisions are made by machines."

## Minutes for Decision

This argument was picked up by Dr. Kistiakowsky, who in 1945 spent the night on a test tower preparing for the first nuclear explosion at Alamogordo, N. M. He depicted the situation that might develop if the Sentinel radar picked up an object that appeared to be an accidentally launched missile warhead.

Because only a few minutes would be available between detection and making a decision on whether to fire a defensive missile, he said, it would be "impossible" for the President to make the decision.

Rather, he said, "the decision has to be made automatically by a computer or by a comparatively junior military officer."

Nor, he continued, does the problem stop there, because a computer is "really a very stupid thing" and would have to be programmed to distinguish between a warhead and thousands of pieces of "space junk" that are constantly orbiting the earth.

## Concern Over Blinding

Dr. Kistiakowsky also noted that the flash of the two-megaton warhead on the Spartan missile, the long-range Sentinel interceptor could blind people on the ground. As a result, he said, "many people would be blinded" because of "a decision cranked into a computer years before or because of a decision made by a junior officer."

His warning could cause international repercussions because, under some circumstances, the Spartan warhead could be exploded over Canadian territory.

Dr. York said that the com-

mon argument on Capitol Hill that a Sentinel system was worthwhile if it could save some lives was based on two fallacies: First, that the system would work perfectly and second, that its deployment would be "the last move" in the arms race.

By "the inexorable logic of the arms race," he said, the Sentinel deployment would prompt the potential adversary to increase his offensive power and "then you are actually worse off if the defense system doesn't work perfectly."

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